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REGIONAL IMBALANCES OF INFORMATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN RUSSIA

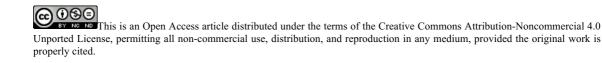N. V. Medvedeva (a)*, L. V. Senicheva (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Russian State Social University, 129226, Vylgelm Pik street,bld.4-1,Moscow, Russia, medvedevanv@rgsu.net
(b) Russian State Social University, 129226, Vylgelm Pik street,bld.4-1,Moscow, Russia, Senichevalv@rgsu.net

Abstract

The relevance of the studied problem is conditioned by active spread of information and communication technologies in public administration and the need to overcome the digital barrier and the formation of knowledge societies. The article pays attention to the issues of online interaction of citizens with authorities, electronic participation of citizens in management, the problems of ICT implementation evaluation at the regional level, and their role in state-public relations. The results of the study indicate that Russia has good potential in terms of electronic government and the index of electronic participation development in the field of information and communication technologies and informatization, but there is a high differentiation in the development of this area at the regional level. The level of transparency of these information resources of regional authorities is not high in most regions of the Russian Federation. It is necessary to form new ecosystems of both public and private platforms, expand the capabilities of the public service portal by attracting additional actors capable of public service provision (commercial and non-profit organizations). It is concluded that the development of e-Government technologies, increase the effectiveness of information and communication technology use in management is possible only if citizens are included in the process of making managerial decisions, openness and transparency of the authorities, strengthening public trust, and creation the culture of multilateral cooperation between public, private and public sectors, the modernization of mechanisms for intersectoral cooperation, the formation of new partnerships at all levels of government.

Keywords: Digitalization, information and communication technologies, e-government, online interaction.

1. Introduction

The spread of information and communication technologies and the development of global relationships can help overcome the digital barrier and build knowledge societies. These strategic guidelines were declared on the agenda of the 2015 UN meeting "Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Thus, most countries of the world have laid such foundations in their strategic development programs. However, for the successful implementation of set goals, states need to have serious potential.

In the modern world, the development and reproduction of social and human capital should be based on the highly developed fields of science and education. Data is increasing every year and is the basis for the development of not only innovation, but also the modernization of public administration. It is necessary to apply an integrated approach to digitalization, since at present the level of ICT technology development in many countries does not allow the use of modern technologies for the formation of a sustainable society, the implementation of an open and transparent government policy. Moreover, according to the majority of modern researchers (Morgan, 2017; Medvedeva, 2018), successful partnerships begin with the stakeholders who have a common vision.

In various countries of the world, open data projects operate successfully. In particular, Australia operates the service that provides the comparative analysis of education level, socio-economic development data by district. In the UK, there are information and cartographic services that show in detail the situation in the districts and streets of the city. On this service, citizens can offer their ideas or ideas about the development of the city.

The e-government program is being successfully implemented in Estonia, which can significantly reduce budget expenditures. In the United States there is a website that presents data on budget fund formation and spending with details.

Most countries build interaction between authorities and the population through information and communication technologies. For example, the creation of e-government in France was proclaimed as one of the priorities, among the trends of public provision with information. In the program for building the information society in France, much attention was paid to the creation of contacts between authorities and citizens by e-mail. Currently, each person can turn to a professional official for qualified advice concerning some problem.

2. Problem Statement

The closed activity of government bodies from the population aggravates contradictions and conflicts in the socio-political space. Therefore, at present, many countries are striving for open interaction with citizens. Information and communication technologies can be used not only to improve the quality and speed of public services, but also to strengthen the interaction between society and government. E-government in many countries is the combination of e-government and e-democracy. Accordingly, the lack of support from the population for this mechanism will not allow to use all its capabilities in full (Kurfalı, Arifoğlu, Tokdemir, & Paçin, 2017). Social satisfaction with e-government services is studied by Navarro, Vera, and Lopez (2018).

In this regard, the study of factors affecting the informatization of society and contributing to the development of ICT in public administration, gain special importance. The issues related to the formation of the state potential for the introduction of such technologies is becoming the subject of research for many scientists in their countries. The cross-cultural comparison of e-government in Spain and the USA is the subject of study by Rufín, Bélanger, Molina, Carter, and Sánchez (2014). In general, the digitalization strategy, according to German scientists, should be holistic, systemic, action-oriented and based on technical and organizational culture (Furchert & Wandersleb, 2019). The factors affecting the intention of university students to accept and use e-government services in China are examined by Mensah (2019), which state that "favorable conditions, perceived quality of services, trust in government and social influence are important factors that determine the intention of university students accept and use e-government services" (p.12). The degree of information and communication technology use during process control in Serbian organizations was studied in the following works: Radovan Vladisavljević, Dragan Soleša, Predrag Stojković. They highlight the key problems that hamper the development of ICT in companies: the lack of a clear strategy, means and desire to maintain a modern information system (Vladisavljević, Soleša, & Stojković, 2019). The use of information and communication technologies in the social sphere, the impact of digital technology on professional competencies, and innovation on the digital economy is the subject of research by many scientists (Fossen & Sorgner, 2019; Huang, 2016). In particular, the following issues highlight the key problems of ICT use in healthcare: the difficulty of electronic medical information exchange due to the lack of standards, the lack of preparation for an effective use of ICT, high costs, etc. (Huang, 2016). The presented questions make it necessary to study the development of information and communication technologies in the public administration of Russia.

3. Research Questions

Despite a wide range of studies in the field of the information society and information and communication technology development, at present insufficient attention is paid to the problems of ICT implementation evaluation at the regional level, as well as to their role in state-public relations. Thus, the issues of online interaction of citizens with authorities, electronic participation (e-participation) of citizens in management become relevant. The level of information openness among state authorities of the Russian regions is considered as one of the most important during e-government technology implementation in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is conditioned by the presented research questions. Based on the analysis of the level of digital development in Russia and the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, it is proposed to develop the trends for the development of online interaction of citizens with authorities and electronic participation. The goal achievement will be carried out on the basis of the analysis for the key indices of information development of the state (ICT development index, United Nations e-Government Development Index (EGDI), e-participation index, local online service index), as well as the ratings of state authority information openness in the Russian regions.

5. Research Methods

During the study, both general theoretical methods (analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalization, theoretical modeling) and empirical methods (document analysis) were used. The information base of the study was the statistical data the project "Infometer". The basis for the analysis of documents was report «UN study: E-government 2018. The use of e-government to develop a sustainable and flexible society», «The digital transformation of public administration: myths and reality. 2019», «The highest executive bodies of state power of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Open site as a simple interface. 2019», as well as materials and collections of the Ministry of Digital Development, Telecommunications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation (UN, 2018; HSE, 2019; Infometer, 2019).

6. Findings

At present, the information activities of state authorities of the Russian Federation are aimed to solve the problems of information transparency of authorities, informing citizens about their activities, work results, and providing public services to citizens, organizations and businesses. The development of information and communication technologies allows us to move into the field of effective communication relationships that provide citizens with a shorter time to receive the necessary public service or information.

In 2017, Russia ranked 45th out of 176 (in 2016 Russia was ranked as 43rd) in the ICT development index, which is built on the basis of three sub-indexes - access to ICT, the use of ICT and ICT skills. In many ways, this situation is due to the fact that at present barriers still remain that prevent organizations in the ICT sector from actively developing innovations. First of all, these are economic barriers: lack of own funds, high cost of innovations, high economic risk, lack of financial support from the state and others. In addition to economic factors, one should note the insufficiency of legislative and regulatory documents governing innovation (also in the field of informatization) and the low level of innovation and information infrastructure development.

According to the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI), the Russian Federation is 32nd among all countries in the world, which is quite high. This index characterizes the state of human capital, ICT infrastructure and the web presence of public authorities (UN, 2018).

Estimation of the number of users of public service portal shows a positive trend. According to the Ministry of Communications of the Russian Federation, if in 2013 it was used only by 6.9 million people, 52.8 million people used it in 2017.

If we analyze the main goals of online interaction of citizens with authorities, we can note that for several years of receiving information through official websites and portals of public services (about 70%), making an appointment via the Internet (57%), as well as mandatory payments online (40%) make the priority (HSE, 2019).

However, while the Russian Federation as a whole is not in a bad position in world rankings in terms of information and communication technology development, the situation in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation is ambiguous. Having analyzed the ratings compiled with the help of the

"Infometer" project, it is possible to assess the level of informational openness of state authorities in the Russian regions (Infometer, 2019).

"The highest executive bodies of state power of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation" rating data. An open site as a simple interface" allows us to note that the simplicity of the interface of 84 official regional sites makes 56% in total (Infometer, 2019). Moreover, 100% is observed only in two constituent entities of the Russian Federation - the Government of the Rostov Region and the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug. The lowest positions in this rating belong to the Republic of Dagestan (23.7%), Kabardino-Balkaria (21%) and Ingushetia (14.8%).

Analysis of the rating "2019: The highest executive bodies of state power of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Open Data" demonstrates that the average level of data openness from RF regional governments makes 54.2%. The leading regions are Tomsk Oblast (100%), Moscow (97.7%) and the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (94.7%), the outsiders are the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (10.3%), Kabardino-Balkaria (11.3 %) and the Republic of Mordovia (12.2%).

The analysis shows that about half of the Russian regions are not sufficiently effective in information policy implementation, since the degree of openness of these information resources remains insufficiently high for most constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

According to the index of electronic participation (e-participation), which measures the level of interaction between the state and citizens using Web 2.0 tools, including blogs, social networks and mobile communications, Russia occupies the 23rd place, which indicates a fairly good state potential, necessary to create conditions for the formation of e-democracy (UN, 2018).

In addition, Moscow takes the 1st place among 40 cities selected for the experiment in the Local Online Service Index (LOSI), which covers the technical and substantive aspects of the city / municipality websites, as well as the quality of electronic services and initiatives to increase electronic participation through the portals. However, the projects created by authorities do not always allow citizens to participate fully in decision-making (UN, 2018). For example, most of the questions for Moscow residents on the Active Citizen project website involve the answers to the questions that have already been formed. Thus, the survey is not aimed at clarifying the opinions of citizens about the need to make a decision, but rather at discussing a decision already taken by the authorities. However, the issues that are more important in a strategic and vital plan are not considered on the site. It should also be noted that electronic participation technologies have not yet been widely disseminated throughout Russia, the level of development of most constituent entities of the Russian Federation in this area is heterogeneous, and the active spread of digital technologies occurs only in large cities and megacities.

7. Conclusion

Thus, it should be noted that Russia has good potential in terms of e-government and the index of electronic participation development in the field of information and communication technologies and informatization. Moreover, there is a high differentiation in the development of this area at the regional level. The level of transparency of these information resources among regional authorities of most regions of the Russian Federation is not high enough. In this regard, it is necessary to apply an integrated approach to the formation of the information environment in Russian regions.

To achieve effective results in the field of informatization management and the active development of e-government technologies, it is necessary first of all to strengthen public trust. According to the American sociologist T. Parsons: «Trust is one of the conditions that ensure social stability» (Parsons, 1971) The opinions that «trust is a community expectation that its other members will behave more or less predictably, honestly and with attention to the needs of others, in accordance with some general norms», were adhered to the sociologist and futurologist F. Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 1995). Trust is seen as the condition that preserves the stability and integration of society.

It is possible to increase the level of citizen trust in government through the formation of new ecosystems of both public and private platforms, it is necessary to expand the capabilities of the public service portal by attracting additional actors capable of public service provision (commercial and non-profit organizations).

The development of e-Government technologies, increase the effectiveness of information and communication technology use in management is possible only if citizens are included in the process of making managerial decisions, openness and transparency of the authorities, strengthening public trust, building a culture of multilateral cooperation between the public, private and public sectors, modernization mechanisms of intersectoral cooperation, the formation of new partnerships at all management levels. Accordingly, electronic participation through the active use of online tools will expand the scale of citizen involvement in management processes. All this will allow the use of modern technologies for the formation of a sustainable society, the implementation of an open and transparent policy of the authorities.

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